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Modern-Art Titan Pablo Picasso Invented Cubism

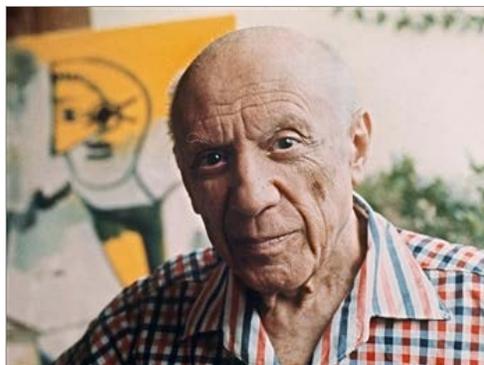
By MARY O'NEILL, FOR INVESTOR'S BUSINESS DAILY

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Pablo Picasso was born in 1881 in Malaga, on the southern coast of Spain, and was hitting his artistic stride by age 15. AFP/Getty Images [View Enlarged Image](#)

American GIs, upon entering Paris at the close of World War II, reported their top sightseeing goals: the Eiffel Tower and Pablo Picasso.

One is more than 1,000 feet tall.

The other was 5 feet 3 inches.

Yet Picasso's stature extended far beyond Paris to command worldwide attention — as the greatest modern artist.

Due in part to his personal charisma — he tagged himself The King in an early painting — but primarily due to his defiant overthrow of 500 years of tradition, Picasso changed the course of 20th century art.

He knit the modern century — its energy, shifts, confusion and novelty — together with an almost supernaturally creative drive to produce works emblematic of the new age.

The Pablo Way

Experimentation, abundance, spontaneity, any kind of rule breaking in any art form, became possible after the force of Picasso.

It was a force that innovated not only in painting, but also in sculpture, printmaking and ceramics, and remained ceaseless through an 84-year career.

Born in Malaga, on the southern coast of Spain, Picasso (1881-1973) displayed what he called a "frightening" aptitude for art from his earliest days. His first word was not "mama," but "pencil," and, though not quite accurate, he claimed with characteristic bravado that even as a kid he could draw like Raphael.

His father, an art teacher, moved the family north. After

Picasso's Keys

- Created the first formal innovation in 20th century art: cubism.
- Overcame: Leaving the secure world of academia to find patrons and dealers on his own terms.

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leapfrogging over even senior students at the local academy, Pablo exhibited with adults, won national medals and garnered commissions, becoming one of the most distinguished painters in Barcelona by age 15.

Yet Pablo Picasso quickly recognized those early achievements in conformity as akin to a death threat. His parents' hopes for regional recognition for their son, maybe even a professorship, were dashed when he left the prestigious Royal Academy of San Lorenzo in Madrid after only one year.

"One must learn not to paint," he later said. The conventions of his predecessors had to be subverted; they were no match for the shape-shifting reality of contemporary life.

According to William Robinson, curator of modern European art at the Cleveland Museum of Art, "Picasso's idea was to strip away that veneer of elegant and pretty, of things that are taught, and to paint in a more direct, emotive manner."

Part of that directness was to openly acknowledge that the pre-eminent value in art had become obsolete.

Since the 15th century, a painter's aim was to create the appearance of the natural world, an illusion of three-dimensional depth, on a flat canvas. Perspective lines must cohere at a single point, and hues must be shaded to mimic distance.

- Lesson: Aim to innovate in every possible artistic medium, from painting and sculpture to set design and prints.
- "What do you think an artist is? Painting was not invented to decorate houses. It is an instrument of war for attack and defense against the enemy."

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